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Afghanistan: The War in the Cities

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An Intelligence Assessment

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*NESA 84-10021
February 1984*

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [] Office
of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. It was
coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. []

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**Afghanistan:
The War in the Cities**

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Key Judgments*Information available
as of 28 December 1983
was used in this report.*

Fighting in Afghanistan's cities increased substantially in 1983 and caused growing concern among Soviet and Afghan officials. [redacted] growing insurgent capabilities and the difficulties facing the Soviet and Afghan Government forces leads us to believe that the level of urban insurgency will continue to increase at least in the near term.

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Soviet and regime sweeps through the major cities have not established security:

- The insurgents' interfactional cooperation has been improving in attacks on urban centers.
- The insurgents' operations typically consist of assassinations, kidnappings, mining of routes rarely traveled by civilian vehicles, bombings, and rocket and mortar attacks on government vehicles and installations.
- The insurgents avail themselves of the cover of darkness, urban layout, and terrain to avoid retaliatory strikes by superior Soviet and Afghan forces.
- The insurgents' decentralized leadership and careful planning and intelligence hinder regime counterefforts.

Afghanistan's cities are essential to long-term Communist control over the country:

- The cities are important to the military effort as links in the supply, transportation, and communications networks.
- Some observers believe the Soviets are trying to force more people into the cities, where government control is stronger, and thus diminish insurgent activity in the countryside.
- Secured cities could provide a better conscription base and improve regime opportunities for indoctrination of the populace.
- Tight, long-term security—especially in Kabul—would limit international observation of resistance activity, lend credence to the regime's claim of legitimacy, and thus diminish international criticism of the regime and of the Soviet presence.

Urban civilians have provided the insurgents with essential support for operations in their cities and are likely to continue to do so:

- At times outwardly compliant, they generally maintain a resilient hostility toward the Soviets and the Afghan regime.
- They provide insurgents with important intelligence and enable the insurgents to operate their own intelligence networks.
- They often provide food, shelter, and other support to insurgents.

Chronic problems such as the Afghan Army's low morale and high desertion rates, along with Communist Party factionalism, abet insurgent operations, including those in the cities.

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The insurgents cannot maintain an open presence in any urban center for more than a brief period and are unlikely to establish long-term control over major cities:

- The Communists' extensive daytime security forces and superior firepower ensure the functioning of the central—though not always the local—government.
- Soviet and regime intelligence networks hamper insurgent operations.
- The insurgents' lack of expertise with explosives and periodic shortages of appropriate weaponry and ammunition limit the scope and effectiveness of their operations.
- Political, religious, and ethnic differences inhibit cooperation among insurgent groups.

Urban insurgents probably will gradually increase the level of small-scale attacks, bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations in the near term. Civilian support for the urban insurgency is likely to grow despite the potential for war weariness, since the Babrak regime has little prospect of gaining popular approval. The Soviets are likely to require at least small increases in troop strength in the cities in the months ahead.

The high visibility of the urban insurgency—as opposed to the rural—keeps international attention on the Afghan conflict. Major increases in the fighting in Kabul, however, will result in greater Soviet and regime pressure on the US Embassy, which publicizes the conflict. Increased pressure may result in the Embassy's closure.

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Afghanistan: The War in the Cities

The Importance of the Cities¹

Afghanistan's cities are essential to long-term Communist control over the country. The cities are important links in the maintenance and development of the nation's supply, transportation, and communications networks and are basic to the economy and the Soviet and regime military effort. Cities provide bases for conscription and tax revenue, for building party membership, and for advancing regime social programs and ideology, thus furthering the process of Sovietization. Thorough Soviet and regime domination of the urban populace, in our view, would limit the insurgents' urban operations and civilian support for the insurgency. Although the war in the countryside would continue even if the cities were under tight regime control, such control would hamper the insurgents' ability to obtain manpower, supplies, and intelligence and would free Soviet and regime military forces for operations against the insurgents.

Because of these considerations, some Western observers believe it is Soviet policy to drive the populace from the countryside to the cities, where the regime has a better chance of exerting control. As the urban population increases, the urban insurgency will take on even greater importance as a means for frustrating the Sovietization of Afghanistan (see table).

We judge that fully securing the cities would also provide an important international benefit to the Soviets and the Afghan regime. Fighting in the cities, especially in the capital, is more likely to be observed by foreigners than is fighting in the countryside and



Measures to improve Soviet-Afghan relations include cultural exhibits.

Sovfoto ©

more likely to draw international attention to the Afghan conflict. Tight, long-term security—especially in Kabul—would limit international observation of resistance activity and lend credence to the regime's claim of legitimacy, diminishing international criticism of the regime and of the Soviet presence.



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Although our assessment is that Soviet and Afghan forces are sufficient to control the most important areas in Afghanistan—the capital and major military installations—Soviet and regime sweeps have not brought continuing security. The Soviets cannot spare men to establish a sufficiently strong, permanent presence throughout the cities. Since the Soviet invasion in December 1979, a pattern has emerged in which Soviet and regime forces conduct periodic urban clearing operations but then insurgents gradually reassert themselves.

The level of urban insurgency increased markedly during 1983, in our judgment, although the degree of regime control and insurgent presence varies from city to city and according to the season (see inset and appendix).

In recent months, [redacted] the insurgents have demonstrated improved cooperation and planning in intensified attacks on Kabul and have maintained strong pressure on Soviet and regime forces especially in Herat and Kandahar.

Soviet and Afghan officials have shown increasing concern over the level of urban insurgency. In August 1983 Afghan party officials expressed fear that Kabul would be the scene of a "bloodbath" in the coming months, [redacted] Some party members believe that the regime is losing

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Population Trends in Afghan Cities

Thousands

City	1979 Census Population	1983 CIA Estimate
Kabul	913	1,803 ^a
Qandahar	178	117
Herat	140	110
Mazar-e Sharif	103	105
Jalalabad	53	50
Konduz	53	55
Baghlan	39	40
Maymanah	38	40
Pol-e Khomri	31	33
Ghazni	30	27
Kholm	28	30
Khanabad	26	28

^a Kabul's population has increased from an estimated 1.3 million in 1980 to an estimated 1.8 million in 1983 primarily because of the flight of rural residents to escape military operations in the countryside. Although the population in other urban areas such as Qandahar and Herat has decreased, the influx into Kabul has raised the urban share of the country's population from about 10 percent in 1979 to almost 20 percent in early 1983.

Much of the population fluctuation in the cities depends on the local level of fighting as well as on seasonal conditions.

heavy fighting near a city often causes a large number of rural residents to seek safety in the city. Similarly, heavy fighting in a city drives people out—often to Kabul or out of the country. Moreover, many insurgents winter in the cities to avoid harsh conditions in the countryside.

control not only of the countryside but of the major cities as well, and the Central Committee has considered that urban warfare may assume primary importance.

Soviet military experts are concerned over how to defeat the insurgents without destroying the cities. Afghan Ministry of Defense officials believe that the assignment of additional Soviet units to the Kabul area would only worsen the security situation,

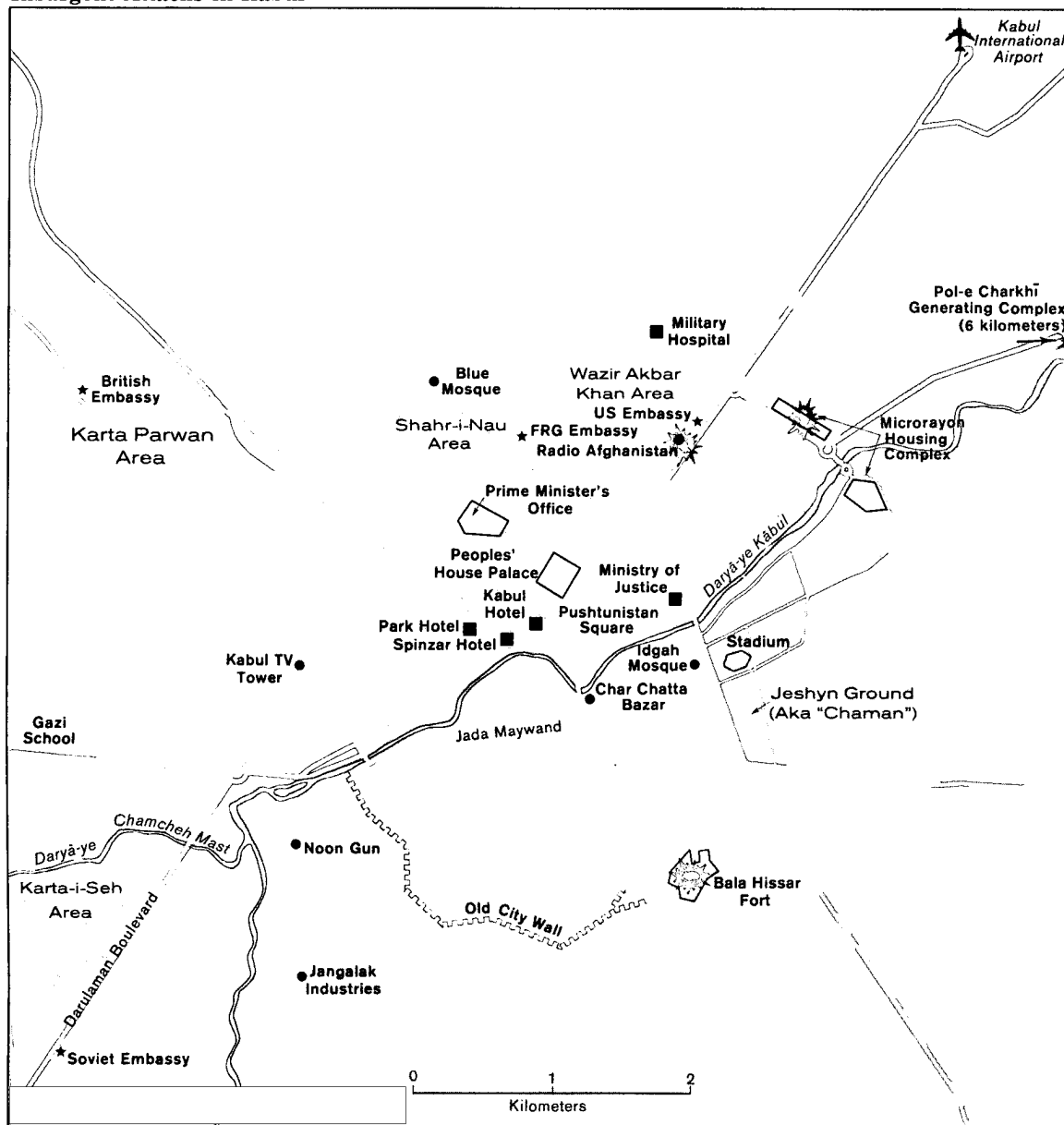
probably because greater local resentment could result from higher Soviet visibility.

Conditions in the Cities

Political, economic, and social conditions in Afghanistan's cities vary not only from city to city but also from month to month. The cities have several conditions in common. According to US Embassy sources

- Educational services provided by the regime are in a shambles. Higher education has in effect ceased, and schools are usually attended only by small numbers of party members' children.
- Medicines are in short supply, and health care is minimal.
- Food and fuel, even when in adequate supply, are costly, and their prices have continued to rise. Annual inflation appears to be running near 100 percent.
- Highways have deteriorated from heavy military traffic, lack of maintenance, resistance destruction of bridges, and the detritus of convoy ambushes. Those factors and regime checkpoints have inhibited the flow of goods and people between cities.
- Energy shortages have caused periodic blackouts, restricted production, and idled fruit and cotton processing factories in several cities.
- More Communist-country goods have been appearing in shops as the economy has grown increasingly oriented toward the USSR and its allies.
- Prostitution, alcoholism, and drug abuse linked with large-scale black marketing have developed widely since the Soviet occupation.
- The educated elite and nearly all of the middle class have fled the country.
- In some cities, resistance organizations have established skeletal civil administration functions such as judicial systems and tax collection.

Insurgent Attacks in Kabul



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Factors Favoring the Insurgents

In our view, Afghan insurgents have demonstrated effective urban guerrilla tactics, threatening regime security and hampering the development of Soviet control. [redacted]

Insurgent Cooperation

Our assessment is that the insurgents have gradually shown increasing cooperation with each other in carrying out attacks in cities. [redacted] many urban operations are carried out by groups based in the countryside who infiltrate into the

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cities, assisted by intelligence from groups based in the cities. In November 1982 US Embassy sources in Kabul indicated that the record of insurgent cooperation in the Kabul area was mixed but that the various resistance groups were becoming better organized internally and were cooperating more closely with each other. Evidence of improved cooperation appeared in May 1983, when, according to US Embassy reports, three separate insurgent groups jointly attacked the Pol-e Charkhi generating plant in Kabul, destroying or damaging a number of armored vehicles, killing as many as 50 regime troops, and wounding many more. Even more dramatic evidence of cooperation appeared in Kabul three months later with coordinated attacks on the Bala Hissar Fortress, the Microrayon housing complex for Soviet and Afghan officials, and Radio Afghanistan, according to US Embassy reports (see map). [redacted]

[redacted] cooperation among groups includes exchange of information, supplying of ammunition, [redacted] and joint attacks. The cooperation has extended to cities other than Kabul. In Ghazni, for example, [redacted] five different organizations exchange intelligence and sometimes carry out joint attacks. [redacted]

Insurgent Tactics, Weaponry

In our judgment, much of the insurgents' success in threatening urban security has arisen from their use of brief, limited attacks. Unlike insurgents in the countryside, the urban guerrillas have not attempted to seize and hold particular areas or to establish strongholds such as those in the Panjsher Valley, the Shomali Plain, and Paktia and Paktika Provinces. The insurgents have been able to avoid devastating retaliatory attacks by superior Soviet and regime forces.

[redacted] typical insurgent operations in cities have consisted of assassinations; kidnappings; mining of routes rarely traveled by civilian vehicles; bombings; and rocket and mortar attacks on government vehicles, police posts, government buildings, and restaurants frequented by regime personnel. According to US Embassy reports, the Soviet Embassy and Soviet military headquarters have been repeatedly attacked. [redacted] when regime security in a city has been heavy, insurgents

for their own safety or that of the populace have concentrated on targets on the cities' outskirts. [redacted]

The insurgents carry out most of their operations at night and avail themselves of the concealment offered by the older, poorer areas of the cities. Night operations, [redacted] provide the insurgents an advantage in that police posts and government installations are less well manned then. In our view, the Soviet and regime desire to avoid inflicting damage on government facilities and on their own personnel has often made them reluctant to employ airpower and artillery in the cities. A response with heavy weaponry at night increases the chances of unwanted destruction. The Soviets at times, however, have used heavy weaponry against cities with a strong insurgent presence, as in Qandahar in early 1982. [redacted]

In Kabul the Soviets have on rare occasions attempted to use additional searchlights and helicopters at night to stem resistance attacks, but to little avail, according to US Embassy reports. US Embassy reports also indicate that insurgents are highly active in the older, poorer sections of Kabul, where the narrow and winding streets, the high population density, and the warrenlike housing provide ready concealment. [redacted] the impoverished sections of Kabul, in particular, have a high proportion of refugees from all over Afghanistan who are generally sympathetic to the resistance. [redacted]

Mountainous terrain near major cities provides an advantage to the insurgents. Near Kabul the terrain has frequently permitted insurgent groups to attack and then withdraw to safety. [redacted] Our assessment is that in such terrain Soviet and regime heavy weaponry is less effective, and airborne forces have more difficulty locating and retaliating against insurgents. [redacted]

The urban insurgents, in our view, have displayed technical expertise and ingenuity in adapting to local conditions. [redacted] in Kabul some insurgents with sufficient technical skill

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have wired explosives to the ignition systems of Soviet military vehicles. In Ghazni, [] insurgents have used homemade, battery-powered landmines. The mines are made with locally available oil cans, shrapnel, TNT obtained from unexploded Soviet bombs, and blasting caps. The insurgents occasionally have dressed in Soviet or regime military uniforms during attacks on weapons depots, US Embassy reports indicate. In Qandahar insurgents masquerading as soldiers on conscription patrols caught and killed more than a dozen party members and KHAD agents after checking identity cards, according to US Embassy []

Decentralization, Careful Planning

We judge that insurgent success also has arisen from its decentralized leadership, compartmentalization, and careful intelligence and planning. In our view, the decentralization of the insurgent movement prevents the regime from neutralizing it. []

[] scores of bands representing all ethnic groups usually operate in small units. The capture of one insurgent does not usually lead to the capture of, or intelligence on, many others. Even if an important insurgent leader is captured or defects, other bands can continue their independent operations. One insurgent organization in Kabul, [] maintains a network that assassinates officials and raids government buildings. The network is composed of three-man cells whose operatives are shopkeepers, taxi drivers, mullahs, bureaucrats, and professionals. []

Careful planning has also lent success to some insurgent operations. One organization, after surveillance of an assassination target, []

[] forms an assassination squad typically consisting of five women and one man, who will actually fire the weapon. Four of the women walk together two abreast with the gunman directly behind them. As the group approaches the target, the two lines of women separate, permitting the gunman to shoot through the opening. After the shooting, the women again bunch together, shielding both the gunman and the last woman, who carries away the weapon. Attacks inside residences or public buildings are normally carried out only if a member has obtained a job inside the building or has some other plausible reason for being there. []

Civilian Support

We believe civilian support for the insurgency has been essential for the war in the cities. [] civilians provide intelligence, aid insurgent infiltration, serve as a source of recruits, and often provide food and shelter. [] "civilian" and "insurgent" are often synonymous because most civilians at least passively support the resistance and many fighters also work in the civilian economy much of the year. []

Civilian Attitudes. Fear of Soviet and regime retaliation frequently keeps urban populaces from openly supporting the insurgency, but high tension often exists just below an outwardly compliant surface, according to various observers. In Kabul, particularly, the populace is volatile. In one instance, according to US Embassy sources, a Soviet soldier killed an unarmed Afghan student and had to be rescued from a crowd that gathered, calling for death to the Soviets and President Babrak. Heavy troop reinforcements arrived to maintain order, and the area remained tense for hours. []

In our view, civilian hostility to the regime and Soviet forces has shown great resilience. Following heavy bombing of Qandahar in January and March 1982, the populace asked the resistance to limit its activities in the city, according to US Embassy sources. In March 1983, however, the popular attitude changed, according to US Embassy reports, following a cordon-and-sweep operation for conscripts and weapons. Qandaharis complained bitterly of underaged and overaged relatives being conscripted, and resistance activity in the city quickened markedly. US Embassy sources report that insurgents attacked the telephone exchange and KHAD headquarters and kidnaped businessmen who were sympathetic to the regime. In April 1983 air bombardment of districts in Herat suspected of providing safehaven to insurgents resulted in high civilian casualties and great property damage, according to the US Embassy. The city, nevertheless, remained the scene of intense resistance activity throughout the summer. []

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In Kabul, where Soviet and regime control is strongest, the civilians have even dared to show contempt for the regime at government-organized demonstrations, according to US Embassy reports. At a demonstration in front of the US Embassy in March 1983, the crowd ignored the speakers, just as they had during previous demonstrations. Most chatted among themselves, waved amiably at the Embassy, or tried to find ways to avoid the watchful eyes of regime guards and steal away. As orators called to the crowd to shout *Marg, Marg, Marg* (Death, Death, Death) following calls for President Reagan's death, some of the crowd substituted *Barq, Barq, Barq* (Electricity, Electricity, Electricity), mocking the regime's inability to prevent insurgent sabotage of powerlines. [redacted]



Afghan trading with Soviet soldier. [redacted]

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Intelligence. Urban civilians, in our view, not only have provided insurgents with important intelligence but have enabled the insurgents to operate their own networks. [redacted]

most major insurgent groups have small bands of insurgents within the cities to gather information and maintain contacts with informants from the government camp. In Kabul, [redacted]

one insurgent group maintains informants in the Ministries of Interior and Defense to provide information on Soviets and party members who may be selected for assassination. A second group, [redacted]

has infiltrated the Afghan civil and military administration and encourages employees to procure passes allowing unhindered travel for insurgent group members. In Mazar-e Sharif, [redacted]

the insurgent network includes regime civil servants as well as members of Afghan border guard units. [redacted]

In some cities where the insurgents themselves have no intelligence networks, they depend totally on civilian sympathizers. [redacted] in three northern cities—Andkhvoy, Sheberghan, and Maymanah—insurgent squads infiltrate from outlying villages to attack targets identified by sympathetic civilian residents. [redacted]

Other Support. The civilians provide food, shelter, and other assistance that is often essential to the insurgents' urban operations. In Mazar-e Sharif, [redacted]

civilians provide food to insurgents, free when supplies are ample. [redacted]

[redacted] insurgents' families remain in the city, where they help earn money to support the resistance by selling fruit and other farm products to Soviet troops. In the same city, insurgent bands sometimes sleep in the houses of sympathizers prior to carrying out an attack, [redacted]

In Qandahar various insurgent groups draw support through a taxation system, [redacted]

In July 1983, [redacted]

Qandaharis actively supported insurgent infiltration into the city, facilitated by normal population flow during the harvest season, when manpower is needed from neighboring areas for work in the surrounding fields. [redacted]

Other Favorable Factors

Afghan Army Problems. We believe that chronic problems in the Afghan military impede government attempts to maintain urban security. [redacted]

the Afghan Army is poorly trained, equipped, and motivated. Units are usually under strength, and a high desertion rate has been a continuous problem for the regime. The most notable recent case of high desertions is that of most members of the garrison at Khowst. According to US Embassy reports, the desertions aided the insurgent siege of that city that began in September 1983. In our view, the Afghan Army's unreliability forced the Soviets to use more of their own troops to tighten security in

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Afghan soldiers patrol the streets of Qandahar.

Wide World ©

Kabul in autumn 1983, and these troops were thus not available for operations in the countryside. Other evidence of Afghan troops' lack of dedication is that in several cities, [redacted] Afghan troops openly tolerate an insurgent presence during certain hours of the day. [redacted]

Party Factionalism. We believe factionalism in the Afghan Communist Party is also heavily responsible for undermining security in several cities, especially Kabul. Regime leaders have described as "frightening" the number of Parchamis assassinated in the capital, [redacted]. An Interior Ministry official stated that intraparty feuding is responsible for more political assassinations in Kabul than can be blamed on insurgents, the same source reports. In our view, political assassinations, along with continual factional tension between the Interior Ministry and KHAD, create rivalries that insurgents often exploit to gather intelligence for selecting targets and planning operations. In winter 1983, [redacted]

Parchamis' eagerness to recruit members to their faction resulted in allowing fundamentalist insurgents to infiltrate their ranks and thereby carry out assassinations and the bombing of a government building. In June 1983 KHAD arrested a group of Afghan military officers in Kabul, presumably Khalqis, for assassinating several Parchamis, [redacted]

Factors Limiting the Insurgents

Regime Security

In our view, the Communists' extensive daytime security forces in most cities have ensured the functioning of the central—though not always the local—government and discouraged insurgent activity. Local governments in some cities periodically cease to function because of the insurgents' presence, but the central government maintains adequate control of the capital and can function with only nominal or periodic control of other Afghan cities. The insurgents lack the organization and firepower necessary to stop sweeps, clearing operations, and press-ganging. [redacted]

Kabul is one of few Afghan cities where insurgents cannot circulate openly during daytime hours, and the authorities can organize major political gatherings as well as halt counterdemonstrations. In February 1983, on the third anniversary of Kabul's biggest demonstrations against Soviet occupation, insurgents evoked little popular response after they circulated throughout the city at night and tacked handbills on people's doors exhorting them to take to their roofs to shout *Allahu Akbar* (God is great). In 1980 there had been a massive response to that appeal, and regime forces reacted with an extensive show of force. In 1983 the insurgents did not call on shopkeepers to close their businesses on the anniversary, probably to avoid having the doors smashed open by troops as occurred on a previous occasion. [redacted]

The threat of air and artillery retaliation on civilians prevents the guerrillas from firing persistently from any neighborhood in a city, [redacted]

[redacted] In Ghazni insurgent firing positions from residences were identified by Soviet and regime troops, who later destroyed the homes, [redacted]

Soviet and Regime Intelligence

Soviet and regime surveillance networks and informers hamper urban insurgents. In spring 1983 regime authorities in Herat used an insurgent defector to identify guerrillas and resistance supporters among captured civilians, according to US Embassy sources.

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Urban insurgents and their sympathizers are also subject to being identified through a regime surveillance network. [redacted]

insurgents from Mazar-e Sharif have only brief, occasional visits with their families for fear that they will be captured by Soviet and regime intelligence services operating within the city. [redacted]

[redacted] groups based in the countryside often must send boys or old men into the cities to gather information or procure supplies, fearing that men of other ages will be identified or conscripted. In Kabul, according to US Embassy sources, KHAD maintains a system of informants comprised of street urchins recruited and trained at the regime-run orphanage. [redacted]

KHAD, in our view, is continually seeking to improve its surveillance effort but is having difficulty. [redacted]

[redacted] in the capital KHAD has been tightening its control over a "block system" in which a coordinator—formerly used to monitor such matters as cleanliness and maintenance—has come to be increasingly responsive to the intelligence service. US Embassy reports, nevertheless, regularly note explosions and assassinations in the principal new housing area, the Microrayon complex, which probably has the easiest layout in the city to monitor. [redacted]

KHAD finds it difficult to maintain surveillance in the older, poorer sections of Kabul, particularly where there are mazes of dark alleys and interconnecting houses. [redacted] people in these areas tend to be very religious, and thus anti-Soviet, and to have extensive contacts with the insurgents. Strangers are immediately assumed to be working for KHAD or the police and are killed. As a solution, [redacted]

[redacted] KHAD is pushing for the destruction of the older sections of the city and their replacement by new apartment blocks. Such urban renewal projects, in our view, are too expensive for the government to undertake on a large scale. [redacted]

Limited Training and Weaponry

Although [redacted] the insurgents are gradually improving their weapons skills and are better supplied than in the past, our assessment is that the insurgents' capacity to undermine urban security is often hampered by lack of expertise with explosives as well as by periodic shortages of

appropriate weaponry and ammunition. Most insurgents have little technical knowledge of explosives, [redacted] and do not use such potentially effective materials as plastique. Despite improved supplies in recent months, some groups suffer from unequal distribution of weaponry and ammunition. Insurgents have frequently experienced a shortage of remote control activators of explosives, [redacted] We judge that weapons that are effective in the countryside are often impractical for urban guerrilla warfare. Mining a busy city street could result in destruction of civilian vehicles rather than those of the Soviets or the regime. [redacted]

Insurgent Disunity

We believe cooperation among insurgent groups has improved over the past two years, but political, religious, and ethnic differences periodically result in botched operations or in clashes. In an operation in Mazar-e Sharif two bands, unaware of each other's plans, attacked different sections of the city on the same day, [redacted] The dual attack forced one group to abandon its primary objective. Differences between the fundamentalists and other groups have sometimes resulted in pitched battles near cities. [redacted]

Outlook

Our assessment is that in the near term the insurgents probably will continue to increase costs for the Soviets as they attempt to establish improved urban security. The insurgents are likely to increase small-scale attacks, bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations. Civilian support for the urban insurgency is likely to grow. Judging from the way citizens in Qandahar and Herat rebounded following massive bombings of their cities, war weariness is not likely to develop into a significant problem for the urban insurgents in the short term, though it may become an important deterrent over a period of several years. [redacted]

We believe that even in the cities, where the government exerts some control, the Babrak regime has little prospect of gaining the legitimacy that derives from

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consent of the governed. Further alienation of the populace is likely to result from deteriorating standards of living, ruinous inflation, inadequate physical security, and forcible conscription. Above all, we believe the insurgents and their civilian supporters will continue to be motivated by their historical hatred of foreign domination—especially by non-Muslims—and the visibility of Soviet troops in urban centers. [redacted]

The urban insurgents, in our view, will not be able to dislodge Soviet and regime forces. Fear of reprisals against civilians along with Soviet and regime security measures will prevent the insurgents from greatly expanding urban operations. Soviet and regime forces will continue to control—though tenuously at times—the city centers and to conduct periodic sweeps and house-to-house searches. We believe Moscow would bring in reinforcements from the Soviet Union to maintain control of Kabul and other major cities if needed. [redacted]

We believe that the war in the cities will continue to frustrate Soviet attempts to consolidate power in Afghanistan. The Soviets are likely to require at least small increases in troop strength in the cities in the months ahead, not only because increased insurgent attacks are likely but also because the population of several cities, especially Kabul, is continuing to grow. [redacted]

Implications for the United States

The urban insurgency increases the military and economic costs to Moscow of enforcing security—tying down forces that could otherwise be used to maintain supply lines, protect airfields and other installations, and combat insurgents in the countryside. The high visibility of the urban insurgency—as opposed to the rural—keeps international attention on the Afghan conflict and thus increases the political costs to the Soviet Union. We believe major increases in the fighting in Kabul, however, will result in greater Soviet and regime pressure on the US Embassy, which publicizes the conflict. Increased pressure may result in the Embassy's closure. [redacted]

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Appendix

Conditions in Six Major Afghan Cities

Kabul



The Kabul populace is generally obedient to regime control, though most residents at least passively support the resistance, according to US Embassy reports. [redacted] US Embassy sources indicate assassinations of party members and suspected KHAD informants are common, and there have been periodic night attacks with rockets and mortars on Soviet and regime installations. [redacted]

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Supplies of food and consumer goods are adequate, but the war has caused a sharp reduction in the flow of commodities from the countryside, making the people heavily dependent on imports from Communist countries, according to US Embassy reports. Frequent energy shortages cause blackouts and restrict industrial production, according to [redacted] [redacted] US Embassy sources. Hoarding is common, and there is a flourishing black market. Minimal public services are available, though health care is very poor. [redacted]

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Ghazni

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Probably the least secure of Afghan cities, according to US Embassy reports, Ghazni is frequently the scene of insurgent attacks. Most Ghazni residents actively aid the insurgents.

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[redacted] regime troops usually retreat to their barracks by midafternoon, when armed insurgents come in to purchase provisions; the insurgents usually leave by sunset, though many have legitimate jobs in the city and commute from surrounding areas.

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[redacted] factories have been idled by energy shortages. Most available meat is dried; fuel, gasoline, and kerosene have been expensive and in short supply. The only medicines available are of Soviet manufacture and in short supply; many residents are unfamiliar with Soviet medicines and do not know how to use them. By November 1982 much of the population had fled. Prior to the Soviet invasion, the school population was about 6,000; in November 1982 it was about 200—all were children of party members.

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Qandahar

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Bombed into submissiveness in 1982, Qandaharis resumed active support for the resistance following a government conscription drive in 1983 that left them embittered, according to US Embassy sources. Party members who venture into residential areas or outlying bazaars are often assassinated. According to US Embassy reports [redacted] the vast majority of residents are insurgents or insurgent sympathizers. US Embassy reports indicate insurgents have used bullhorns at night to taunt regime personnel to come out of their garrisons and fight, and insurgents periodically attack military posts in the city center. [redacted]

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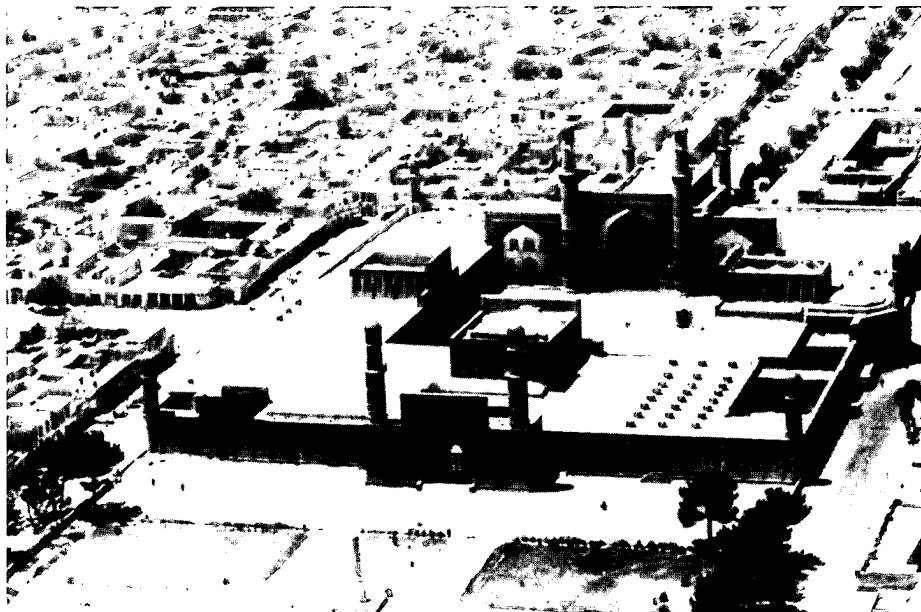
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According to US Embassy reports [redacted] fighting and energy shortages have left factories at a standstill and the economy in a shambles, but essentials are available because of smuggling from Karachi via Spin Buldak. Food prices have risen markedly but remain lower than in Kabul. The grape harvest in 1983 was barely half its normal size, mainly because fighting made it difficult to hire laborers to harvest along the roads west of the city. Public services have been almost nonexistent. Only one school has been open, attended exclusively by children of regime and party officials. Insurgent groups maintain a taxation system. [redacted]

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The regime controls the heart of the city by day, though armored escorts for officials are common, according to US Embassy reports. Fighting in and around the city has occurred almost nightly for the past several months. Most people with money have left the city for Kabul or Iran, as have many men faced with conscription; those remaining tend to be poor. Energy shortages are severe and have left factories idle. Food, though usually available, is high priced. The school systems are paralyzed.

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Jalalabad

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One of the most secure cities, Jalalabad is usually quiet, though insurgents frequently attack outlying military posts and periodically rocket the airport, according to US Embassy reports [redacted]. The heavy Soviet troop presence and the practice of many insurgents to winter in the city and thus to keep the city peaceful have probably contributed heavily to Jalalabad's calm. In winter 1983, however, a massive bombing by insurgents destroyed part of one of the bazaars. In contrast to Kabul, the Soviets have not tried to remain unobtrusive, and Soviet soldiers can often be seen shopping in the bazaars. Public services are available at about the same level as in Kabul. Jalalabad's university, the only one in Afghanistan other than that in Kabul, no longer functions. [redacted]

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Mazar-e Sharif



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According to US Embassy reports [redacted] local residents heavily abet the insurgents, and there have been a large number of assassinations of regime personnel and suspected sympathizers. The streets are usually empty by dusk. In early spring 1983 a massive Soviet and regime offensive against nearby resistance strongholds permitted regime officials to move freely in the city for several weeks. Supplies of food and other essentials are usually adequate.

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